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## CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY

October 29, 2004

Dear Stakeholder:

California's high-speed train project is nearing the important step of identifying preferred route alignment alternatives along the 700-mile long system for the preparation of the Final Program EIR/EIS.

During the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) Board meeting September 22, 2004, board members indicated their tentative approval, pending further review of public and agency comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS, of staff's recommendations for identifying preferred alternatives along the Bakersfield – Los Angeles, Los Angeles – San Diego (via Orange County), and the Northern Mountain Pass corridors. The Board tentatively approved the following:

- For Los Angeles to Bakersfield, the alignment through the Antelope Valley with a station in Palmdale
- For Los Angeles to San Diego via Orange County, the alignment to Irvine
- Using existing transportation networks to connect LAX with the proposed high-speed train system
- For the northern mountain crossing from the Central Valley to the Bay Area, identifying a broad corridor for further study before selecting a preferred alignment alternative

The identification of preferred alternatives in the remaining alignment corridors-- Sacramento to Bakersfield, San Jose to Oakland, San Jose to San Francisco, and Los Angeles to San Diego (via Riverside County)-- will be addressed at the next CHSRA board meeting, November 10<sup>th</sup> in Sacramento.

The Board's identification of a preferred high-speed train alternative for the Final EIR/EIS, expected by the end of the year, will mark a significant milestone in the process. From the multiple route options that have been considered for various corridors, the Final EIR/EIS will identify a preferred alignment and station locations connecting the majority of the proposed HST system.

The exception is the route connecting the Central Valley to the Bay Area, called the northern mountain crossing in Draft EIR/EIS. For this area the board gave tentative approval to staff's recommendation to identify a broad corridor and to prepare a separate program-level environmental impact report (EIR/EIS) to identify a preferred alignment alternative within this corridor. The study would examine alignment options from the Pacheco Pass in the south to the Altamont Pass in the north, but would exclude routes through and under Henry Coe State Park.

Many comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS urged further study of potential northern mountain crossing alignments in order to weigh the potential environmental consequences of each.

This additional process is not expected to delay the project – assuming funding can be secured (an anticipated \$1.7 million to complete the study).

We are pleased that the environmental review process has worked as it was intended — to engage public agencies and the general public, to identify areas that need further study, and to review existing technical data. More than 2,000 comments were received on the Draft EIR/EIS. The CHSRA board appreciates the time and effort spent by many to review the Draft EIR/EIS, and urges interested persons and agencies to continue to be involved in the review process.

Although we have made remarkable progress in this environmental review process, we are now seeing the effects of budget cuts. The good news is we're within budget so far and there's a collaborative effort to find funds for the additional Central Valley to Bay Area studies, which would follow the Final EIR/EIS. However, even with funding for those studies, it's unlikely that we'll be able to certify the Final EIR this fiscal year without a budget increase.

We invite you to review the staff's recommendations on preferred alignment alternatives and to attend the Authority's November 10<sup>th</sup> meeting where there will be additional discussion of identifying preferred alternatives for the Final EIR/EIS.

For additional information on the staff's recommendations on preferred alignment alternatives visit the CHSRA website at [www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Mehdi Morshed  
Executive Director